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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 000395

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SPAIN ON AFGHANISTAN, ISAF STAGE II CONTRIBUTION

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Classified By: Classified by Political Officer Ricardo Zuniga; reasons
1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. Coordinator for Afghanistan Maureen Quinn, accompanied by Department of Defense, JCS, and State Department officers met with Spanish MOD, MFA and Presidency officials on 1/26 to discuss Spain's commitment to lead a PRT in western Afghanistan. Just before Ambassador Quinn's arrival, the GOS released a brief statement indicating that it was "studying" the possibility of both a Spanish deployment to western Afghanistan and taking over the FSB in Herat. The MOD meeting will be reported via septel. GOS officials told the USG team that the press release was intended to convey Spain's determination to lead a PRT, though operational and political details remain to be worked out. MFA Director General for Foreign Policy Rafael Dezcallar described the PRT decision as one of several recent GOS gestures aimed at repairing bilateral relations with the USG. Dezcallar said that Foreign Minister Moratinos may travel to Afghanistan soon and that Spain may establish a permanent diplomatic mission in Kabul.

12. (C) At the Presidential Palace, Deputy National Security Advisor Maria Alonso stressed the Zapatero Government's need to build public support for the deployment, given the general Spanish skepticism towards overseas military missions of any type. She reviewed the steps necessary for the GOS to obtain Parliamentary approval of the PRT mission and said she was confident that the deployment would be approved with minimal debate. She said Spain would also like to further discuss the USG offer to consider providing civilian experts to aid the PRT, per REF A points. End Summary.

//MFA: SPAIN COMMITTED TO AFGHANISTAN//

13. (C) MOD DG for Policy Admiral Torrente confirmed to Ambassador Quinn that Spain plans to lead a PRT in western Afghanistan, specifically at Qal'eh-ye Now, and to contribute troops to the FSB at Herat. Full details of the MOD meeting will be provided septel.

14. (C) At the MFA, DG Dezcallar pointed to the success of ISAF and OEF operations in Afghanistan as a "demonstration that multilateralism can be effective" and said NATO could be proud of its work in "helping the Afghans help themselves." Ambassador Quinn agreed that much had been accomplished, especially through new models such as PRTs. She welcomed the news of Spain's decision to lead a PRT in western Afghanistan and to participate in the Herat FSB.

15. (C) Dezcallar said the PRT decision was "intentionally leaked" by the GOS in order to convey Spain's commitment to the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. He said this was driven by strategic considerations, since Spain's investigation of the March 11 train bombings in Madrid suggested that the order to carry out the bombing had come from individuals based in Afghanistan.

//NEXT STEPS ON SPANISH PRT//

16. (C) While Dezcallar emphasized that the GOS has made the political decision to participate in a PRT, he also noted that several steps remain. First, Spain will send a team of MOD and MFA experts to Afghanistan to scout the precise locations where Spanish forces will be deployed: Herat and Qal'eh-ye Now (NOTE: The scouting team departed for Afghanistan on 1/28. END NOTE). Second, the GOS will analyze the report of the team and deliver a recommendation to President Zapatero as to how Spain's deployment should proceed. Lastly, President Zapatero will "consult" with Parliament to gain legislative support for the mission.

//MENDING FENCES WITH USG//

17. (C) Dezcallar made clear that an important factor in Spain's decision to proceed with a PRT was their sense that it would help bring an end to bilateral tensions between Madrid and Washington. Dezcallar said he knew the USG appreciated actions more than words, so Spain had moved ahead on Afghanistan and other issues, including Spain's contribution of \$20 million to the UNDP to support the Iraq elections, GOS diplomatic efforts to encourage good behavior on the part of Iraq's neighbors, and the decision of President Zapatero not to stop in Venezuela during his visit

to Latin America. Dezcallar said he hoped these positive steps would be recognized by the USG and would encourage reciprocal gestures from Washington. He said "normalization" of ties with Spain would help both sides work together to advance the USG's "ambitious reform process" in the Mideast and suggested Spain's experience with the Barcelona Process could prove useful for the U.S. Ambassador Quinn said the USG appreciated the positive steps taken by the GOS and told Dezcallar that she would carry his message to Washington.

//DEEPER SPANISH ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN//

18. (C) Dezcallar said that Foreign Minister Moratinos may travel to Afghanistan in the next several months. In addition, Spain hopes to establish a permanent diplomatic mission soon in Kabul and would eventually like to open an embassy. Ambassador Quinn encouraged this increased GOS engagement, saying the Afghan people were counting on the international community to help them realize their growing hopes for stability and economic growth. Dezcallar noted that the GOS has directed aid to Afghanistan through the Asian Development Bank, but would be willing to study other possible assistance projects, including on counter narcotics.

//OEF)ISAF MERGER//

19. (C) At Dezcallar's request, the USG team briefed him on the security situation in Afghanistan and the state of play among the various regional leaders and factions. Dezcallar said he was encouraged by the USG's information regarding improved security conditions and suggested that coordination between ISAF and OEF operations will have to improve and perhaps even be merged as ISAF moves westward. (NOTE: We assume Dezcallar was suggesting the merger of the missions under an overall NATO command, since it is highly unlikely the GOS would place Spanish forces at the disposition of a U.S. command through participation in OEF. END NOTE.) Ambassador Quinn agreed that integration is the right move, but said that we have no set timeline. She noted the already high level of coordination between OEF and ISAF personnel.

//PRESIDENCY: A FEW BUMPS ON THE ROAD TO PRT//

110. (C) In her meeting with Deputy National Security Advisers Maria Alonso and Diego de Ojeda, Ambassador Quinn expressed the USG's appreciation of Spain's decision to lead a PRT and to contribute forces to the FSB in Herat. Alonso, who covers the North America account, said the GOS was pleased that the MOD and MFA had presented a good plan for Spain's participation and that the GOS now had to explain the mission to a public skeptical of any Spanish military deployment abroad. Alonso was confident that the GOS would have no problem in gaining Parliamentary approval for the deployment since the Popular Party, the largest opposition party, supported the NATO mission in Afghanistan. However, Diego de Ojeda pointed out that the PRT proposal would have to be slipped in between major legislative action on controversial internal issues, perhaps briefly delaying formal approval of the PRT. Also the two small leftist parties that generally work with the Socialists to give them a Parliamentary majority will vote against Spain's leadership of a PRT, creating a minor, but unwelcome rift within the center-left.

//USG SUPPORT//

111. (C) Alonso indicated that Spain wants to emphasize the civil reconstruction aspect of its PRT, but lacks civilian experts to support that element of the mission. Spain hopes to establish strong links to NGOs already operating in western Afghanistan. Alonso also alluded to the USG offer per REF A to consider making U.S. civilian experts available to buttress the Spanish deployment, saying Spain would appreciate such assistance. Ambassador Quinn and Alonso discussed the makeup of the existing PRTs and the USG team urged Spain to study all of the models in developing its own plans.

MANZANARES